The History of

The Amitytown

Society Of Painters

Written By

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The Amitytown Society of Painters was organized in the spring of 1940 by a group of local artists who had been painting together. They met on Thursday and Sunday afternoons for several summers along the river at the Lyle Husted farm near Cornell, Illinois. The founders were two Pontiac men — Dr. Thomas Lockie, a local dentist and member of the Brown County Indiana group, and Thomas Googerty, who was considered one of the country's outstanding craftsmen and designer of decorative wrought iron. For over thirty years Mr. Googerty taught forge and wrought iron work at the Pontiac State Penitentiary. He bequeathed his own work to the Chicago Art Institute. The beautiful Poor Box made for St. Mary's Church in Pontiac was an example of Mr. Googerty's fine work. The gates at the Catholic Cemetery and the South Side Cemetery in Pontiac are other examples.

Mr. Googerty selected the name — "The Amitytown Society of Painters", because the group confined their activities around a mythical town — "Amity", which was an abandoned house on an old mill site on the Lyle Husted farm two miles south of Cornell.

The object of the Society, according to Mr. Googerty, was "the advancement of all those who are interested in landscape painting, including amateur and professionals alike; to bring more knowledge to people who are interested in and like painting; also, to interest girls and boys in schools, and to encourage them to make an honest effort to produce landscapes, in whatever medium they wish to use. The Society would furnish lecturers to point out why the pictures were painted in the particular manner used, and to answer questions regarding methods used in painting". "All of the great painters of the past and present did not come from the great cities and their art schools", Mr. Googerty said. "A large number came from small towns and hamlets, where they painted along streams and in the woods, like those of Amitytown".

Members of the Society were divided into two classes — the Active Members and the Associate Members. Active members were all those who were painting or working in any of the other mediums, besides oil. The Associate members were "those who are interested in the aims of the Society, and who are working for the advancement of art in their schools and communities".

The original Active, or Charter members, were the following:

Dr. Thomas Lockie, President and Director
Mrs. Lyle Husted, Vice President
Mrs. Virginia Smith Miller, Secretary-Treasurer
Catharine Yost and Thelma Patterson Gehring, Lecturers
Maurine McClelland, Dwight
Mary Elizabeth Reynolds, Dwight
Moore Foster, Pontiac
Louise Schneider, Pontiac
Minneola Bonnell, Pontiac
Thomas Googerty, Pontiac
Ann Myers, Pontiac
Betty Jane Duncan, Pontiac
Paul Monser, Pontiac
Gertrude Bradley, Cornell
Mary Husted, Cornell.

Associate Members were:

A. E. Tiffney, Cornell
Clarence Louderback, Cornell
Mrs. C. M. Dargan, Pontiac
Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Smith, Pontiac
Clarence Miller, Pontiac
Dr. John H. Ryan, Pontiac
Richard Miller, Pontiac
Warden O. H. Lewis, Pontiac
Pontiac State Penitentiary
Mrs. H. I. Shepherd, Pontiac
Paul Yost, Pontiac

The dues were twenty-five cents a year for Active members, and one dollar a year for Associate members.

In January 1940 the Fine Arts Department of the Pontiac Woman's Club sponsored an Art Exhibit of paintings and handicraft of local artists at the club quarters in the Y.M.C.A. building. This paved the way, and on November 25th and 26th, 1940, the First Annual Exhibit of the Amitytown Society of Painters was held in the Y.M.C.A. Forty-

three paintings were exhibited. In the succeeding years, with the exception of 1943, during World War II, there has been an Annual Exhibit at the following places:

1940, 1941 — at the Y.M.C.A.
1942 — in the Amitytown Studio over Murphy's Store
1944 — in the Masonic Temple
1945-1948 (inclusive) — at the Williams Mill
1949, 1950 — at the Pontiac Public Library
1951-1957 (inclusive) at the Ill. Water Co. office
on W. Washington St.
1958 to the present 1971 at the Pontiac Public Library

To add to the sociability of the opening day, the public is always invited to linger at the coffee table, presided over by a committee of the artists.

We were fortunate to have Professor John Wesle of the Illinois State University Art Department supervise the hanging of this year's 31st annual exhibit, and afterwards discuss each artist's paintings.